

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) having a washer (~~1~~) formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller (~~2~~), wherein at least said washer (~~1~~) has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least 5 volume % and at most 25 volume %, and austenite grain size number of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

2. (Currently Amended) The thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) according to claim 1, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

3. (Currently Amended) A support structure (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load of a compressor for a car air-conditioner (~~100, 200, 300~~) in which a swash plate (~~103, 203, 303~~) rotates as a main shaft (~~104, 204, 304~~) rotates and a piston (~~107, 207, 307~~) swings accordingly, including

a thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load generated by the rotation of said swash plate (~~103, 203, 303~~), having a washer (~~1~~) formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller (~~2~~), wherein at least said washer (~~1~~) has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least 5 volume % and at most 25 volume %, and austenite grain size number of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

4. (Currently Amended) The support structure (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load of a compressor for a car air-conditioner according to claim 3, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

5. (Currently Amended) A support structure (~~510~~) receiving thrust load of an automatic transmission including a torque converter having an impeller (~~501~~) and a turbine (~~503~~) opposite to each other with a stator (~~502~~) in between, comprising

a thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) having a washer (~~1~~) formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller (~~2~~), at least between said stator (~~502~~) and said impeller (~~501~~) or between said stator (~~502~~) and said turbine (~~503~~), wherein

at least said washer (~~1~~) has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least 5 volume % and at most 25 volume %, and austenite grain size number of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

6. (Currently Amended) The support structure (~~510~~) receiving thrust load of an automatic transmission according to claim 5, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

7. (Currently Amended) A support structure (~~10~~) for a continuously variable transmission (~~600~~) in which rotation of an input shaft (~~601~~) is changed in a nonstep manner and transmitted to an output shaft (~~603~~), including

a thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load generated by the rotation either of said input shaft (~~601~~) or said output shaft (~~603~~), having a washer (~~1~~) formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller (~~2~~), wherein at least said washer (~~1~~) has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least 5 volume % and at most 25 volume %, and austenite grain size number of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

8. (Currently Amended) The support structure (~~10~~) for a continuously variable transmission (~~600~~) according to claim 7, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

9. (Currently Amended) A support structure (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load of a manual transmission allowing, by engagement between a gear (~~664a, 664b~~) of an input shaft

(661) and a gear (~~664h to 664k~~) of a counter shaft (663) and engagement between a gear (~~664h to 664k~~) of the counter shaft (663) and a gear (~~664e to 664g~~) of an output shaft (662), stepwise change of speed of rotation of said output shaft (662) from the speed of rotation of said input shaft (661), including

a thrust needle roller bearing (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load of any of said input shaft (661), said counter shaft (663) and said output shaft (662), having a washer (1) formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller (2), wherein at least said washer (1) has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least 5 volume % and at most 25 volume %, and austenite grain size number of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

10. (Currently Amended) The support structure (~~10A, 10B~~) receiving thrust load of a manual transmission according to claim 9, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.